

## **Section 9A Technology**

### **Introduction**

Technology is changing every aspect of our lives. Innovations in information and communication technologies are rapidly and profoundly transforming the way we work, do business, govern and communicate. The City of Shoreview has the opportunity to use information and communication technologies to improve the community for its citizens, businesses and overall economy.

Individuals increasingly rely on technology to connect them to their work place, schools, community, family and friends as well as products, services and information. These technologies include home computers, the internet, cable television and cellular communications. Technology has the potential to promote citizen involvement in the community and to increase social connectivity. However, efforts should continue to promote equal access to technology for all citizens at schools, libraries and other community gathering places.

Telecommunications is becoming a critical infrastructure need for all businesses. More and more businesses are relying on Internet access, online commerce and video conferencing. Consequently, demand for high bandwidth service is increasing at a tremendous rate. As the community demands more information and resource sharing and as the number of integrated voice and data services required continue to grow, businesses may be constrained by existing telecommunications service. The Telecommunications and Technology Committee, and the Economic Development Commission have identified that access to high capacity bandwidth, preferably fiber optic, is critical for City businesses to maintain competitive. The importance of fiber technology is discussed in Chapter 6, Economic Development.

Individually, public and private institutions alone may not be able to afford the desired infrastructure. However, public/private partnerships could be developed to ensure that the technology needs of the community and businesses are being met.

### **Existing Services, Partnerships and Ordinances**

The role of local government is to provide leadership at the community level and to implement technology enhancements where appropriate. To that end, the City has embarked on the following endeavors to use information and communication technologies to benefit the community.

#### **City Website**

The City maintains a website to provide access to information relating to Shoreview, including:

- Demographics, employers, history, etc.
- Description of city services.

- City Council schedules, agendas, information packets and meeting minutes.
- Citizen advisory committee minutes and agendas.
- Community calendar.
- Community organizations and schools.
- Community center activities and recreational programs.
- Organizational charts and connections to City staff.
- Financial reports and budgets.
- Voter registration and election information.
- Requirements and applications for permits and licensing.
- On-line payment option for utility bills.
- On-line registration for recreation programs.
- Links to state and federal representatives, community organizations, schools, non-profit organizations and other related sites.

Subscription services are available that provide automated email updates when information on webpages of interest to a subscriber are updated. The City plans to continually improve the website to make more information and resources available and to make these resources easier to find and use.

## **Television**

### **Cable Television**

The City of Shoreview is a member of the 10-city North Suburban Cable Commission established in 1981. The purpose of the Cable Commission is to create more influence with the cable companies than each city would have on its own. The members of the Cable Commission are appointed by the member cities. Each city has one delegate to the Cable Commission. The Cable Commission was originally charged with overseeing the 15-year cable television agreement and ensuring that the cable company fulfilled its obligations. Since that time, the responsibilities of the Cable Commission have evolved to include the provision of Internet access to the member cities and other institutional organizations.

The Cable Commission created the North Suburban Access Corporation, which is charged with managing the community access channels, equipment and facilities as well as training people in the community on the production of programs for public access. It also is a vehicle for working with other cities and other data service providers. The North Suburban Access Corporation is funded by an annual grant from the cable company.

In 1998, the City granted a 15-year cable franchise to MediaOne North Central Communications Corporation, which is now operated by Comcast. The key provisions of the new franchise agreement include:

- **System Upgrade.** The cable system has been updated to a 750 MHz system. The hybrid fiber optic-coaxial system results in more cable channels as well as the potential to provide digital services, Internet access and other services as the market dictates.
- **Institutional Network.** The institutional network will be upgraded to include fiber capacity in the system to facilitate future enhancements.
- **Access Programming.** The cable franchise provides 12 channels for public, educational and government access. This agreement also provides for continued low-cost access.

Current regulations allow the local municipality to grant a franchise to a cable television provider. However, there has been legislation proposed at state and federal levels that would alter the existing franchising authority. Local franchises typically require the provider to provide services throughout the entire community, to provide special services to public institutions, and to provide local public access channels. State or national franchises might allow greater competition by granting non-exclusive franchises, but could affect the level of services now provided to the local community.

### **Broadcast Television**

The three broadcast television towers are a feature of the City's landscape that can be seen for miles. The towers were constructed in the late 1960s, and occupy about 160 acres of land in the center of the City. The land use aspect of the towers is discussed in Chapter 4 – Land Use, of this Plan. The City has informally discussed the future of the towers with TV representatives, who are optimistic that the transition to High-Definition (HD) signals will give broadcast TV new opportunities to compete with cable and satellite television. HD signals use less bandwidth, and so more channels can be broadcast using the frequency spectrum needed for traditional TV signals.

### **Wireless Telecommunications**

There is a growing trend towards relying on wireless communication. Cellular phones are commonly used not only for mobile communications, but many people no longer subscribe to wired phone service. Internet service is also more commonly used on mobile devices that communicate wirelessly. Increased use of these types of communications may lead to greater need for expansion of wireless telecommunications towers.

In 2001, the City adopted an ordinance establishing standards that regulate the construction and location of wireless telecommunication towers/antennae in the community. The ordinance protects the City's local zoning authority concerning the placement, construction and modification of wireless telecommunications facilities while maintaining the rights of the providers. Appropriate locations were designated within two overlay zoning districts and maximum tower heights were established for each of these districts.

Several municipalities in the greater metropolitan area have developed wireless networks to provide internet service to their residents, including Minneapolis, Chaska and St. Louis Park. Chaska owns and operates the network for that City, while Minneapolis and St. Louis Park have

partnered with private companies to install and operate the network. Currently, there are no plans for the City of Shoreview to develop a wireless network throughout the City.

## Goals, Policies, and Recommended Actions

The following goals, policies and recommended actions provide a framework to reap the maximum benefits of information and communication technologies for the City of Shoreview and its citizens.

### Goals

- 1. Improve the quality of life.** Information and communication technologies should improve the quality of life in Shoreview. Information technology has the ability to improve quality of life by providing individuals, organizations and businesses with access that includes data, information, services and commercial transactions.
- 2. Increase community cohesion and citizen participation.** Information technology can promote communication between residents, government and the business community. Over the life of this *Comprehensive Guide Plan*, the City anticipates that, as technology improves and access to technology expands, electronic communications will become an increasingly important means to involve and inform its residents.
- 3. Promote efficient and effective government.** Government will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of its products and services by using information and communication technologies. Citizens are entitled access to information and services in the most convenient and effective manner. It is the City's goal to provide alternative ways to deliver services, transact business and provide access to information.
- 4. Stimulate economic development.** Information and communication technologies will stimulate Shoreview's economic development. The diverse sectors of Shoreview's economy can be fortified by the competitive advantage available through enhanced information technologies. By providing competitive advantage through access to data, information, services and commercial transactions, information technologies will enhance existing ventures.

### Policies

- A. Pursue public-private partnerships to foster effective information and telecommunications technology use and integration into the community.
- B. Encourage the installation of technological infrastructure, such as fiber optic cable, as part of new developments and public projects
- C. Promote technological infrastructure development.

- D. Integrate technology planning with economic development strategies.
- E. Promote municipal television and the City's website as means to increase community cohesion and involvement.
- F. Seek to improve access to technology so that every citizen is afforded the ability to obtain the same information and services.
- G. Support public access and use of the municipal television for increased local programming.
- H. Strive to utilize and maintain quality and up-to-date technology for City services and facilities.
- I. Provide electronic availability of public data and interactive public services when feasible.
- J. Improve service delivery using technology. It is the goal of the City to provide an electronic, alternative means of delivering services, transacting business and providing information to its citizens and businesses.
- K. Develop partnerships with other local governmental units and agencies, including school districts, to support local infrastructure development.

### **Recommended Actions**

- 1. Support and expand the existing framework for electronic delivery of government information and services, such as the City's website.
- 2. Encourage more community participation in public access programming and municipal programming, including actively seeking citizen volunteers.
- 3. Establish goals for increasing local viewership and awareness of municipal television and use of the City's website.
- 4. Pursue appropriate governmental connections and partnerships, such as Access Minnesota, to ensure that the City and its citizens are properly linked to gain access to information and services.
- 5. Encourage deployment of fiber optic technology throughout the City to maintain the competitiveness of City businesses.